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**Building trust in government in pursuit of the sustainable
development goals: what will it take?**

**Redefining relationships and responsibilities to support
participatory governance and responsive public service
delivery, including through e-solutions**

Note by the Secretariat

The paper entitled "Redefining relationships and responsibilities to support participatory governance and responsive public service delivery, including through e-solutions" is hereby transmitted in accordance with the proposed programme of work and agenda for the fourteenth session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration (E/C.16/2015/1). The paper was prepared by Dona Scola, a member of the Committee, taking into account a discussion among the members of an intersessional working group of the Committee on this subject and, in particular, incorporating written contributions provided by the following members of the Committee: Giuseppe Maria Armenia, Rowena G. Bethel, Walter Fust, Angelita Gregorio-Medel and Palouki Massina. The content of and the views expressed in the paper are those of the author and the working group and do not imply any expression of opinion on the part of the United Nations.

* E/C.16/2015/1.



Redefining relationships and responsibilities to support participatory governance and responsive public service delivery, including through e-solutions

Summary

The present paper examines the relationships and responsibilities involved in supporting participatory governance and responsive public service delivery, including through utilizing information and communications technologies, so as to build trust in government in the context of the pursuit of the sustainable development goals. Building upon previous work of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration on citizen engagement, the paper focuses on a variety of participatory governance models to be found in many countries and suggests that there is no one system or solution which can operate as a fix for all.

The paper draws attention to some key factors in responsive public service delivery, including policy coherence at horizontal and vertical levels, performance management, impact measurement and decentralization. Moreover, the presence of educated citizens participating in public affairs is taken as a precondition for a well-functioning democracy, and should be supported by strategies designed to enhance civic education.

The paper recalls that multi-stakeholder processes can enhance democracy by increasing opportunities for participation of those most directly impacted by decisions, particularly those at the grass-roots level, who may be voiceless in governance processes. The paper suggests that strategies for increasing trust between government and citizens offer an ideal means of influencing informal institutions and pursuing more-inclusive processes.

The paper concludes by emphasizing the importance of a citizen-centric public administration, a citizenry that is well informed about civil rights and duties, and responsive, decentralized public services delivered by capable public administrators. These are perceived as being among the best bases for building trust in government in the context of pursuit of the sustainable development goals.

I. Introduction¹

1. No progress can be made in promoting peace, development and protection of human rights unless trust is built in government through appropriate governance and public administration institutions. Building trust in government to enable the pursuit of the sustainable development goals starts with the effective involvement of all interested stakeholders. While the recent democratization movement and other trends have created opportunities for improved political participation, several of their shortcomings continue to distance citizens from effective participation in public affairs. Nowadays, more policymakers are coming to the conclusion that it is crucial to track down the obstacles that hinder effective civic engagement in public governance and address them in a timely manner. The major sub-themes considered in this paper include the redefinition of relationships and responsibilities in support of participatory governance, responsive public services, the role of civic education, the multi-stakeholder approach, and information and communications technologies (ICT) as a tool for and enabler of good-quality public service delivery.

2. Topics specific to citizen engagement were discussed by the Committee of Experts on Public Administration at its previous sessions. At its fourth session, in 2005, the Committee recommended that Member States opt for bottom-up approaches that ensure that it is the citizens themselves that have the last word on the underlying principles, foundations, quality and effectiveness of their own public administration, and that lead to the due recognition of the diversity of national management systems (see E/2005/44, chap. III.B, para. 16). At the same session, the Committee also emphasized the importance of promoting participation in public affairs and finding a sound method of assessing and alleviating the declining trust in government (*ibid.*, para. 18).

3. At its eighth session, in 2009, the Committee recommended that Member States review governance and public administration institutional arrangements, structures, systems and practices to make them more conducive to civic engagement, transparency and accountability as key components of trust, which was stated as being critical for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (see E/2009/44, chap. III, para. 40). In its recommendations, the Committee emphasized the importance of accountability as a crucial factor for government performance and recommended that Member States strengthen the cognitive and participatory capacities of their citizens; the professional and advisory capacities of intermediary organizations; and the learning and analytical capacities of Governments and public managers (*ibid.*, para. 41).

4. At its ninth session, in 2010, the Committee recommended that Member States provide regular reports of their actions in response to the financial and economic crisis so that citizens could become fully participatory in managing its effects and the exit therefrom and to restore the trust of citizens in government (see E/2010/44, chap. III, para. 45). During the same session, the Committee also recommended that the Secretariat continue its work in defining and demonstrating the role of

¹ The present paper was prepared by Committee member Dona Scola, a member of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration, taking into account a discussion among the members of an intersessional group of the Committee of Experts. The paper draws extensively on written contributions provided by Giuseppe Maria Armenia, Rowena G. Bethel, Walter Fust, Angelita Gregorio-Medel and Palouki Massina.

information management and knowledge creation in crisis management and development, with an emphasis on both formal and informal mechanisms of public management and citizen engagement (ibid., para. 47).

II. Building and practising participatory governance

5. Historical and cultural contexts are determinants of the political system that is ultimately established through nation-building processes. How to best organize the power in a given society is the key question for any such system. In societies where the top-down approach prevails, power is held and decision-making is exercised exclusively by a central government and an elite of influential people or a dominant political party, whereas the bottom-up approach is characterized by stakeholder inclusion, community-building and the functioning of local governments based on commonly defined rules and applied power-sharing. Understanding the politics and governance in a given nation provides insight into what drives the organization of its service delivery, and its architecture of accountability for communities and at all levels of government.

6. *World Public Sector Report 2008*² defines participatory governance in terms of the right of every citizen to participate in the democratic decision-making process, particularly at the level of local government. Public participation is now widely accepted as a norm and a standard of good governance for sustainable development. As a result, citizen engagement as a mean towards instituting critical reforms and attaining inclusive growth has become an oft-stated development goal, worthy of wide institutional support and investment. Building the capacity of any society to achieve this is a critical dimension of the theme of participatory governance.³

7. The importance of participatory governance was also emphasized at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2012, where Member States agreed to launch a process to develop a set of sustainable development goals. A 30-member Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals was tasked with preparing a proposal on the sustainable development goals. In its proposal, the Open Working Group identified 17 goals and 169 targets. Two of those goals position citizen engagement as a critical tool for the realization of the sustainable development goals:⁴

- Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
- Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

² See *World Public Sector Report 2008: People Matter — Civic Engagement in Public Governance* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.07.II.H.11). Available from <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoe/groups/public/documents/un/unpan028608.pdf>.

³ Angelita Gregorio-Medel, "The role of informal and formal institutions in citizen engagement", October 2014. Available from http://workspace.unpan.org/sites/Internet/Documents/Formal-Informational%20Institutions_Citizen%20Engagement_AGregorioMedel.docx.pdf.

⁴ Open Working Group proposal for sustainable development goals. Available from <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgsproposal>.

8. Target 16.7 of proposed goal 16 specifically requests Member States to ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels. Target 16.10 requests Member States to ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements. Access to information is a fundamental basis for successful citizen engagement. Specifically, in referring to multi-stakeholder partnerships, under target 17.17, Member States are requested to encourage and promote effective public, public-private, and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships. It should also be noted that under goal 16, Member States are requested to build inclusive institutions at all levels.

9. Organizing participation at all levels is an investment in building trust and confidence. The various stakeholders need to be aware of the areas in which they may participate and when their participation is needed. It is also important for citizens to understand how the rights for launching their own initiatives are formulated. Further, it is important to clarify who can come forward with proposals and how such opinion-making processes are organized across levels and institutions.

10. Oftentimes, policymakers need to appreciate the relationship between recognized demand for local participation and capacity-building. As Governments that have chosen to develop internal capacity for citizen engagement are thereby provided with certain opportunities and face certain challenges, they must plan for them by, for example, defining and filling new roles and ensuring the acquisition of the skills required for the carrying out of those roles, as well as fostering a genuine capacity of decision makers to listen to citizens.

11. There is no one system or solution that can operate as a fix for all. Societies, nations, cultures and actors differ substantially across the globe. Consequently, a variety of participatory governance models can be found in many countries. The goal should be not to export existing models or to single out particular achievements for praise, as if the models in question were contestants in a beauty contest, but rather to secure access to information and share knowledge and know-how with respect to such models. Certainly, the United Nations could play an important role in creating knowledge houses and platforms as well as brokering and mediating contacts among Governments, institutions and expert networks.

III. Responsive public services

12. The key function of public administration is to implement government decisions and to render services to the citizens based on their needs, duties and responsibilities. The scope of services, which depends on defined basic needs for the society and its stakeholders, might be enforced through legislation. Access, affordability and speed of service delivery are key to building trust in government. All of these goals are valid for each level of government at which public service is organized and managed. Well-informed citizens know where to obtain services and expect delivery that is timely, low-cost, and reliable and predictable. In the process of redefining relationships and responsibilities, it is important that the following principle be kept in mind: The function of the public administration is to be there for citizens, but it is not the function of citizens to be there for the public administration.

13. To function properly in order to make the above-mentioned goals a reality, the public administration needs well-trained and capable public officials, modern tools and processes and a strong infrastructure. This sounds practicable; however, in actual practice, problems often arise, beginning with the lack of both rules of engagement, and adequate skills to enable staff in incumbent positions to perform successfully. Lack of transparency in recruiting, and performance management and correction is often the cause of the low level of confidence of citizens. Moreover, the attractiveness of a career in public administration is highly dependent on the types of salaries and benefits offered. As public service delivery should be needs-centred work carried out on behalf of the people, a code of conduct or of ethics for public officials will be instrumental in establishing and maintaining trust in government.

14. Public information is no longer being transmitted by the administration from one to many; rather, transmission is now being conducted from many to many and in an increasingly interactive manner. Public administration officials therefore need more training in the areas of communication and media and adequate capacities for addressing these growing challenges. Social media offer opportunities in respect of increased communication efficiency and demand capacities for managing highly interactive communication. These new media are generating change, as they demand an increased interactivity between service delivery and service demand.

A. Policy coherence

15. Government administrations are usually organized into ministries, or similar types of unit, in accordance with political systems, policy issues and related services. As a part of the system, public administration is further split up into particular offices and smaller units. The structure of Governments and institutional framework design can either increase or decrease coherence. Hence, reversing the "silos" model of government, in which there is a replication of activities without proper coordination and collaboration among offices and agencies, is an imperative. The resolution of such situations remains a significant challenge for many countries.

16. When it comes to policy issues, it is also important to differentiate between horizontal and vertical coherence, especially at the level of national government. Coherence entails efforts not only to secure better policies, but also to ensure that governments work to deliver public services in a focused manner and at lower cost. Coherence constitutes a means of preventing political excesses and showcasing the ability to work together of political institutions and the public administration, which manifest a stronger need for cooperation than for coordination. Vertical coherence depends on political priorities and is often the subject of fierce battles over influence. It is important to have clear rules of engagement in place in order to avert process distortions and open conflicts.

17. Governments often change after election periods. In this regard, public administration, to a large extent, should be a guarantor of continuity and reliability over time. Continuous public administration needs to be perceived not as a threat to politicians but as an asset. Good public servants should always remain aware that they are not merely subject to the will of politicians. They must serve the interests of the people rather than those of particular groups or political parties. Therefore, policy coherence for better public service delivery, especially through periods of

transition between governments, is extremely important for ensuring the continuity of high-quality public services.

B. Performance management and impact measurement

18. Service and performance standards for all levels of public administration are important for both service delivery and overall process management. Sample toolkits for evaluating performances on a yearly basis are easily available. Such a method makes sense when applied in the context of remuneration and staff development.

19. Measuring impact can be viewed as a component of strategic control whose ultimate objective is to determine whether the administration is not only doing things right but doing the right things. New methods are regularly developed to measure impact. ICT offers new tools for conducting rapid appraisals of citizens' enquiries. Output measurement (the input-output ratio) should be complemented by outcome evaluation.

20. While the independent media play an important role in monitoring and reporting performance, they can often be biased. Public administration should therefore, be able to act and react. In this regard, a strategy focused on how to communicate with the media and the public is not only important but necessary. Communication must be organized purposefully and public servants trained accordingly.

C. Decentralization

21. The organization of decentralization of power among governments at the central, provincial and local levels — as written into constitutions, laws and regulations — is pertinent within the context of responsive service delivery and the building of trust in government. Experience shows that the further removed citizens are from a connection to the political decisions that are taken, the greater the effort needed to inform and convince them of the benefits accruing from such decisions. It is the proximity of those responding to citizens' concerns and the pertinence of their local language to the decision-making process that give rise to "good feelings" about being taken seriously and participating effectively.

22. While decentralization is expected to bring decision-making closer to the people, it also entails the need to increase local governments' responsibility for basic service provision. At the same time, the need for local capacity-building increases. The capacity to engage with citizens and civil society organizations should be boosted, with a view to improving service delivery and achieving sustainable development goals.

23. In recent years, there has been a worldwide drive to reduce the power of central Governments and shift tasks and responsibilities to provincial and local levels. However, competences at the local level were often not adequate for handling the shift, which resulted in a de-concentration of power and of duties instead of real decentralization. When tasks, duties and competences are not congruent with each other, decentralization efforts do not work properly. In many cases, the operation of a hybrid system can be observed which often results in

conflicts and mismanagement. Such a redefinition of relationships and responsibilities can diminish rather than build trust in government

IV. Civic education

24. A precondition for well-functioning democracies is the participation of educated citizens in public affairs. As participants, citizens should know their rights and demonstrate dedication to their duties so as to contribute to advancing societal interests. Good citizens are more than consumers of public services and taxpayers. They are responsible for how well public life is organized, how issues are addressed and which politicians are elected as members of parliament and (in many countries) as heads of State.

25. Without a skilled public administration which is well trained and ready to serve, the delivery of any kind of service becomes highly complicated and often leads to a frustrating and unpleasant experience for the citizen as consumer. It is not possible for the public administration to undertake any large-scale action without a public that has been taught that collaboration with the administration and other actors for public service delivery is a right which also engenders responsibilities for all. If participation in the name of public service delivery is not conceived of as constituting a "common good", i.e., a permanent concern of the collective conscience, all the schemes that may be developed risk not meeting public expectations in terms of sustainable development.

26. The degree to which that responsibility is fulfilled depends substantially on how civic rights and duties are explained and understood, and how youth are prepared for their role as good citizens. This is why at all educational levels, adequate civic education-related content has to be defined and incorporated into mandatory school curricula. Needless to say, democratic values and practices are also learned within families — around the kitchen table, so to speak. Democracy is a dialogue. Practising constructive dialogue is an investment in civic education, as is cultivating respect for others and their ideas as well as for minorities and their own rights, and encouraging caring for the local common good. Expenditures in civic education are investments, with high returns and good outcomes, in democracy and the functioning of participatory governance.

27. Another means of empowering people is to provide them with access to open information, to the country's laws and to rules of governance. Access to public information is key and more important for empowerment than are public election campaigns. People should be informed about their prospects for standing for public office and becoming elected and about how best to prepare themselves for the performance of public duties. Nevertheless, in many countries, it is difficult to access information on laws — and even more difficult to claim a right under law. If the rule of law and its principles are not understood or are not followed, then the tendency towards breaking the rules or ignoring the laws will grow. Lawlessness, disregard for the rules and unclear or ill-applied procedures lead to insecurity and failure in service delivery, which decreases citizens' trust in government.

28. Citizens for their part should be aware not only of their rights but also of their duties. They should favour a collaborative approach to needs-based service delivery. Electronic and mobile-based solutions can enhance speed, transparency and accountability as well as reliability of service delivery. New information and

communications technologies offer endless opportunities but also demand clear procedural laws as preconditions. They also need to be secure and user-friendly and to offer reliable solutions. Through the required measures, the role of such technologies can complement civic education in building trust in government.

V. The multi-stakeholder approach and inclusiveness

29. In democratic governing systems, Governments hold the executive power, parliaments exert the legislative power and the judiciary has the power to govern jurisdictions, and interpret and apply the laws. The "society" can be viewed as including civil society, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, media and academia, including research institutions, among other sectors. The multi-stakeholder approach is both a framework and a means of engagement, although it is not a means of legitimization. Multi-stakeholder processes could and should enhance democracy by increasing opportunities for the effective participation of those most directly impacted by decisions, particularly those at the grass-roots level, who are so often voiceless in these processes. The multi-stakeholder approach should enhance democracy by ensuring that the decisions made reflect and are responsive to local concerns and to the broadest range of groups that must bear the consequences of the implementation of those decisions. It should enhance democracy also by making democratic processes more flexible and responsive, and capable of adjusting to changes in contexts, circumstances, technologies and impacted populations.⁵

30. The interaction among stakeholders, including the manner in which that interaction is organized, is essential, as it helps substantially to build the social capital of a nation. Often, however, stakeholders have a problem of understanding each other's interests and means of functioning, as well as each other's languages. It is easier to talk about the multi-stakeholder dialogue than to conduct it successfully. The nature of the basic rules set should be made clear to all, so as to ensure that there is mutual respect for and understanding of each other's concerns as well as a readiness to compromise in the pursuit of working solutions. The nature of the process of preparation of government decisions at all levels is the key determinant of inclusiveness and participation. At the local level, where actors usually know each other better and where proximity facilitates the sharing of concerns, decisions may be made more quickly than at other levels. The problem in this regard is often an absence of mutual trust, which is why inclusiveness when applying a multi-stakeholder approach is essential as well as the proper assignment of a moderating role when the above-mentioned endeavours are undertaken.

Formal and informal institutions

31. Formal and informal institutions interact to shape development goals and outcomes. Formal (public) institutions include such entities as legislatures, courts, public services and the police. According to Douglass C. North, institutions like these consist of "formal rules (constitutions, laws, property rights)" as well as

⁵ Michael Gurstein, "In defence of multistakeholder processes", Gurstein's Community Informatics, online blog entry, posted on 21 March 2013. Available from <https://gurstein.wordpress.com/2013/03/21/in-defense-of-multistakeholder-processes/>.

"informal constraints (sanctions, taboos, customs, traditions, and codes of conduct)".⁶ In other words, the distinction rests on the "rules made and enforced by the State, as opposed to those made and enforced by other bodies, such as religious groups and trade unions. However, experts sometimes refer to informal/formal public institutions (PIs) as organizations. According to Smith (see note 6 below): "Helmke and Levitsky are explicit in distinguishing between 'institutions as norms and rules' and 'institutions as organizations' (p. 3)." In terms of the organizations, the distinction is "between informal PIs that are creatures of statute (instituted by public authorities) and those that emerge more organically from within communities" (ibid.). This is a subject that is highly complex, particularly from the perspective of balancing policy and programme development. Since context analysis is critical in deciding on priorities for how best to achieve a successive approximation of better outcomes, there is a need for a clearer understanding of the complex interaction between these two types of institutions. Recent discussions have pointed out that a rigid demarcation between them is not helpful and often leads to fallacious and confused analyses and thus to poorly informed goal-setting.

32. Exchanges are governed by a set of formal institutions (contracts, authority) and a set of informal institutions (norms, routines), which are deeply intertwined. However, for the most part, informal institutions are treated as external forces producing changes in the benefits derived from using alternative formal structures, and formal institutions as entailing mere substitutes for elements governing informal exchanges.

33. The making of a distinction between formal and informal institutions can be a source of insight. Both types of institutions have a role to play, especially in tackling notoriously thorny problems: formal institutions provide rigid enforcement, while informal institutions utilize compliance approaches that are rooted in, and based on, local customs and traditions. One interesting question, which can serve as a basis for understanding the interplay between formal and informal institutions, is when and how formal institutions support or undermine the contributions of informal institutions, and how the involvement of certain informal institutions can lead to hierarchical failure, and thereby require decision makers to impose constraints on the boundaries of formal organizations.

34. Informal institutions can work in synergy with formal institutions. They can improve public service delivery; facilitate the transition to more inclusive governance; and promote social reconciliation in situations of conflict. In other cases, however, they may compete with formal institutions, particularly in the case of patronage networks. Working with informal actors means, at the very least, acknowledging their roles. Further, entering into dialogue with them in order to secure inclusive rights is important.

35. Government, owing to its reach, which emanates from the authority it wields, can influence informal institutions. However, there are also strong limitations

⁶ See Graham Smith, Centre for the Study of Democracy, University of Westminster, "Options for participatory decision-making for the post-2015 development agenda", paper commissioned for the United Nations Expert Group Meeting on formal/informal institutions for citizen engagement for implementing the post-2015 development agenda, October 2014. Available from <http://workspace.unpan.org/sites/Internet/Attachments/UNPAN93599.pdf>. See also Douglass C. North, "Institutions", *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, vol. 5, No. 1 (winter 1991), pp. 97-112.

placed on the role that government can play in changing informal institutions. Establishment of democracy by the State can exert an important positive influence as regards the opportunities for the reform of informal institutions. Yet, formal democracy alone is often not sufficient, inasmuch as government's influence on family life remains limited and can even be non-existent, particularly in rural areas. The practice of patronage may reflect widely shared cultural beliefs about good and legitimate governance. Unofficial relationships, which play a predominant role in political clientelism, may combine with formal bureaucracy in ways that drastically subvert the type of good governance underpinned by Western notions of democracy.

36. Trust-building between informal and formal institutions, particularly between government and citizens, is the best means of influencing informal institutions and facilitating the pursuit of more-inclusive processes. Moreover, the key to trust-building is the avoidance of competition between informal and formal institutions. Rather than focus on rules-based reform, policymakers should consider using indirect strategies to influence local actors. It is important to understand the conditions in which they can be beneficially linked.

37. The issues of trust, politics and institutions are interlinked and overlapping. They represent factors to be faced in the pursuit of implementing the post-Millennium Development Goals agenda. Many social scientists recognize the importance of the element of trust in building good social relations among people and societies, and in lowering transaction costs. Informal institutional factors and modern factors can combine harmoniously and creatively to address the challenge of growth and sustainable development in the post-Millennium Development Goals period. Through integration, they can not only coexist and provide mutual support but also facilitate the creation of innovative and effective institutions and systems.

38. Despite the drop in public trust of government, government based on democratic ideals still remains the system preferred by citizens. As sustainability of development requires sustainable democracy, areas at the local level may be where democratic processes directed towards development can be embedded and institutionalized.

VI. Information and communications technologies as constituting a tool for and enabler of good-quality public service delivery

39. Developing countries are encouraged to accelerate efforts to ensure affordable access to sound technologies and support systems. Such actions should entail sustaining as well as adapting those technologies to the particular environments of the people targeted for services. Ensuring that they are appropriate to given national and local needs and contexts will advance inclusive participation of local actors in formal government processes. While technology, especially information technologies, can allow for better and faster engagement with people, there is no silver bullet.

40. Governments must establish good policies designed to encompass the scope of, and set the priorities for, e-government and m-applications. If they do not, Governments face the risk of ending up with all kinds of policies and an exponential growth of expenditures, without having acquired the conviction or evidence needed to adopt a proper course of action. The usual problem is that members of government

or top administrators may not necessarily be familiar with technological possibilities and pertinent solutions. Good policy-setting and use of tools are dependent on the right mix of top-down and bottom-up approaches. Regular evaluations help avert heavy and one-sided dependencies on suppliers, which lead to uncontrollable increases in costs. Public procurement should be conducted in a transparent manner, with well-prepared terms of reference and relevant selection criteria.

41. The ICT industry tends to develop products having short life cycles. Users have open wish lists, tempted by solutions that go far beyond their needs or what they can afford. Therefore, ICT projects need to be planned carefully; in addition, a thorough requirements analysis must be executed. Not only does the importance of e-solutions in addressing a number of challenges need to be underscored, but it is imperative to ensure that solutions are both realizable and manageable within the different contexts of Member States. It is also important that concerns be addressed about the threats that e-solutions may pose to sovereignty, particularly of small developing States and the least developed countries.

42. However, as Governments are most often subject to time constraints, they utilize online services. Records management is not always given the priority it deserves, and the issue of transparency is sometimes ignored. The administration may be hesitant to opt for the review of work processes and procedural laws from a fear that they may relinquish the liberty of making interpretations on a case-by-case basis. Procedures that are thought through rigorously have an immediate effect in terms of increased accountability and reduce the opportunities for corruption and/or the dispensing of favours.

43. Furthermore, over the last decade, an increasing number of citizens worldwide have demanded that their fundamental right to engage in policymaking and policy implementation be recognized and that their Governments become more transparent and accountable. In recognition of the rights of citizens, Governments across the world have responded by embracing the concept of open government, including the three core elements of transparency, participation and collaboration.

44. Open government requires open data as precondition and enabler. Open data and open government together can play a major role in good governance by laying the foundations for a new relationship between government and citizens, where all stakeholders work together for the common good of society. Underlying the term *open data* is the principle that information and data should be made available to everyone without any restrictions in respect of their access, reuse and redistribution.⁷ If the massive amounts of information produced by government agencies in the form of documents and data are made available according to open data related principles, they can then be referred to as open-government data.

45. Within the debate on open-government data, there is growing interest in the role of technology in citizen engagement. However, the issue of the storage and use of data is often neglected in ICT projects. Citizens want to know whether their data are safe and not misused since, in spite of the vast advantages associated with open public data, there are also potential downsides and risks. Some of the risks are related to issues centred around privacy and data that can be personalized and

⁷ Division for Public Administration and Development Management, Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, "Guidelines on open government data for citizen engagement (ST/ESA/PAD/SER.E/177), 2013.

misused to the detriment of individuals, communities and social groups. As these risks are serious, the publication process for such data requires careful planning. Along the same lines, in the area of big data, the number of questions being raised is currently greater than the number of answers being delivered. While analysis of big data opens up new opportunities in terms of the quality of public decision-making, issues related to the use of data, confidentiality and security will challenge public administration; and Governments may be faced with new liabilities-related responsibilities towards their citizens.

46. ICT has already enabled the development community to make great progress and holds the potential to accelerate sustainable development in the years to come. Equally important, however, is the issue of ICT security and cybersecurity in all its forms (including security for, inter alia, citizens, Governments, businesses and academia), which has arisen in recent years. At the core of the issue is the need for the international community to ensure that those entering the online world feel safe and secure and experience full trust in the digital world. Discussions on this sensitive topic require a holistic, coordinated approach, grounded in principles of concern to the United Nations system, such as the rule of law, peace and security, sustainable development, governance, human rights and disaster risk reduction. Building improved mutual understanding among Member States is essential to generating increased levels of cooperation among all stakeholders.

47. To build trust and security in the digital world, both public authorities and the private sector must develop capabilities and cooperate effectively. The private sector is not caught in crossfire related only to any national security conflicts, since it is companies and other non-State organizations that are usually decisive in halting the effects of cyber conflicts. Non-State actors tend to have the agility, the subject-matter expertise and the ability to defend cyberspace definitively. On the other hand, the private sector is also vulnerable to threats posed in the digital world. It faces cyber risks such as loss or theft of confidential information, loss of reputation and direct loss from malicious acts.

VII. Conclusion

48. In respect of building trust in government, participatory governance — or the right of citizens to participate in democratic decision-making processes — requires a citizen-centric public administration along with citizens who are well-informed regarding their civic rights and duties. Responsive public services, delivered by capable public administrators, based on coherent policies, aimed at performance for impact and decentralized to the level closest to citizens, can greatly contribute to the building of trust in government. Civic education, which is a precondition for well-functioning democracies, empowers citizens and may further enhance trust in government. Multi-stakeholder approaches and inclusiveness, as well as informal institutions, can assist in redefining relationships and responsibilities for participatory governance. Finally, ICT as an enabler of e-solutions, open-government data and cybersecurity can also contribute to the building of trust among State and non-State actors. Enhancing trust in government will better position Member States to pursue the sustainable development goals.